

An Exploration of the Interrelationships between Inclusive Education, School
Structure and Flexibility, Collaboration and School Values

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Abstract

School improvement literature and research into inclusive education has advocated a more connected approach to developing an understanding of school effectiveness and inclusion (Florien & Rouse, 2001); yet, knowledge gaps exist in the understanding of how school structure, flexibility, collaborative practice and school values combine to create more inclusive schools. Recent inclusive education research emphasises the need to re-evaluate conceptual models of inclusion and how individual contexts combine process, structure and expertise, to personalise inclusive practice (Kinchella & Senior, 2008). Booth et al.'s (2002) *Index for Inclusion* proposed three dimensions that contribute to the development of inclusion, inclusive culture, inclusive policy and inclusive practice. Dyson et al. (2002) suggested that attempts to develop inclusive schools should pay attention to the development of 'inclusive' cultures and, particularly, to the building of some degree of consensus around inclusive values and development of general principles of school organisation and classroom practice. Concurrently, research by Pang (2004) on school structures suggested four binding forces that hold organisations together, cultural linkage, bureaucratic linkage, loose coupling and tight coupling. This thesis examines the interrelationship between inclusive education, school structure and flexibility, collaboration and school values. A two phase multiple case study approach is used; the first using 6 schools as exploratory case studies, then, 3 as descriptive case studies to help explore the profile of an inclusive school and the interrelationships between the four elements above. The exploratory case studies found a common emerging profile of inclusive schools. The subsequent phase two case studies present a description of the interrelationship between collaborative practices; inclusive schooling and school organisation manifest themselves in similar types of schools. Therefore, this thesis contributes to inclusive education knowledge by proposing how the emerging profiles of inclusive schools contributes to a conceptual model of inclusion that have both theoretical and applied school improvement implications.

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